Helderberg College

The college featured in our most recent music overview series (last issue of Notes) was recently closed due to fires that potentially could have destroyed the college. IAMA member Wil Dunbar in South Africa recently sent the following:

There has been a dreadful fire all around HBC. Some valuable forests have been destroyed, as well as thirteen neighboring homes and the nature reserve just outside of the College. The students had to be evacuated and all computers and records, etc. removed from the Admin. & teaching areas on the premises.

They will be resuming school tomorrow (May 3). The following chronology from the HBC website tells the story:

Saturday 16 April

Early this morning (), fire flared up near Helderberg Nature Reserve. By late morning, helped by a very strong wind, the fire was seen coming down Helderbeg mountain towards the Protea Farmer that lives next door to our campus. By late afternoon it was nearing the ClubHouse and Staff housing along the top of the campus. Most of the campus either evacuated by car or walked off the campus to a safe distance. A number of people did stay and are safe.

11:15PM

A number of the fire brigade trucks have left the campus and moved to another problem area. In general the campus should be fine and so far we know of no one on the campus that has been injured or hurt. Our only issue is the strong wind that could cause the fire to start up again or blow embers and start another fire.

11:50PM
The Fire Fighters are now just watching the fire and making sure it does not get worse. There have been some reports about buildings burnt down on the campus, such as the Farmhouse or Club House. This is NOT true. So far, none of the campus buildings have burnt down, except for a very old broken unused storage building which was further away into the bush near the Club house. As far as we know, the olive trees are also currently unaffected.

Update 12:30AM (17 April): Fire Fighters declared the area relatively safe and allowed vehicles back onto the campus.

April 17, 7am

The campus has been closed again. People leaving will not be allowed on until the all clear has been given. This is due to the smoke that is quite dense currently and is not healthy. Note there is also a rumour about the reservoir being damaged, though initial surveillance suggests it is fine, and there should be no water shortage.

9:30am

On behalf of Acting President Linda Niyonizigiye: Helderberg College has been closed early before the break on Thursday. All students can make arrangements to leave and go home, as classes will not be held from Monday to Wednesday. Staff will be notified at a later stage what the situation is, and what critical services will still be required.

Current Status

* The College will reopen 3 May 2011. This is after the holiday break and we trust everyone will return refreshed and rested;

* By the grace of God, the college was spared. No one has been injured on the campus and no buildings were affected, including those in the Primary and High School;

* The water system is fine. No piping or tanks connected to the reservoir were burnt;

  * Services departments, such as Maintenance, Cafeteria, Dormitories, and Farm are open as normal.

Link to the website and photos:


More on the Alabama disaster . . .

IAMAn member Donald Rice in Fort Payne, Alabama, writes:
Just around the corner [from our home] on Rt. 27 there is serious destruction. Rainsville, Sylvania, Flat Rock, Alabama, and Trenton and Ringold, Georgia, as well as Apison, Tennessee, were all hit badly by the tornadoes. We finally got power back after five days. It came on 5-1-11 at 4:45 AM. We lost two of our own church members and their daughter and granddaughter. The grandson is barely alive, but holding on. An SDA member in Tuscaloosa, AL. died and the town is a disaster.